

# The fate of extinction arguments: submission history

In 1982-1984, I submitted the paper "The fate of extinction arguments" to three magazines. It was not published.

**This is the submission history.**

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## The article itself

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The dates on letters to and from journals are given. Delivery required days or weeks: I was writing from Canberra, Australia to *Undercurrents* and *New Scientist* in London and *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* in Chicago. Postal addresses and closing salutations are omitted from the following correspondence.

Brian Martin

# ***Undercurrents***

**20 October 1982**

The Editors  
Undercurrents

Dear Friends,

Enclosed are three copies of an original article, "The fate of extinction arguments", which I would like you to consider for publication in *Undercurrents*. You may find it somewhat more controversial than my previous articles. Personally I think it contains a more important message.

For your information, I was in 1979 one of the founding members of Canberra Peacemakers, then the only peace group in Canberra. In my article I have addressed 'the peace movement', but I think most of your readers will be interested.

Please inform me of your decision as soon as possible.

Brian Martin

**9 March 1983**

The Editors  
Undercurrents

Dear Friends,

On 20 October I sent you an article for consideration, "The fate of extinction arguments". Since I have received no reply and the article has not been published to my knowledge, I presume you do not plan to use it. Therefore I will be submitting it elsewhere.

If you do want to use it, please let me know as soon as possible.

A reply would have been appreciated, even a rude rejection!

Brian Martin

## ***New Scientist***

**9 March 1983**

Michael Kenward, Editor  
New Scientist

Dear Dr Kenward,

Enclosed are two copies of an original article, "The fate of extinction arguments", which I would like you to consider for publication in *New Scientist*. It is an essay review of

Jonathan Schell's book *The fate of the earth*. My view is very critical of the doomsdayism of Schell and others in the peace movement. My article also has more political content than is usual in *New Scientist*, and if you would like this to be toned down I would be happy to consider it.

To give you an idea of my technical grasp of the field, enclosed also is a copy of a recent article from *Current Affairs Bulletin*.

Brian Martin

**17th March 1983**

Dear Mr Martin,

Thank you for your letter of 9th March and for the enclosed article 'The fate of extinction arguments'. Unfortunately this is not suitable for publication in the *New Scientist* and I am returning it herewith.

Michael Kenward  
Editor

***Bulletin of the Atomic  
Scientists***

**25 March 1983**

The Editors  
Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Dear Editors,

Enclosed are two copies of an original article/review which I would like you to consider for publication. Although *The Fate of the Earth* has often been reviewed, I have seen no scientific critique such as I have presented. Therefore I think it may be a useful addition to previous reviews. So that you can see a bit more of the scientific basis for my conclusions, enclosed is a copy of an article of mine from *Current Affairs Bulletin*. You will find that my political conclusions are somewhat different from the usual ones too.

Unfortunately I have no US stamps to send for return postage. But there is no need to return the enclosed materials.

Brian Martin

**1 April 1983**

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists gratefully acknowledges receipt of "The Fate of Extinction Arguments." Our review process takes 4 weeks. However,

there is presently an 8 month delay in publication.

Please let us know if you wish us to review your manuscript for publication given the delay.

Thank you.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

**12 April 1983**

The Editors  
Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Dear Editors,

In reply to your card of 1 April about my article 'The fate of extinction arguments' (my letter of 25 March), please proceed to review the manuscript even given the publication queue.

Brian Martin

**4 July 1983**

The Editors  
Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Dear Editors,

On 25 March I sent you an article/review, "The fate of extinction arguments". In reply to your card of 1 April, I sent a note on 12 April saying to proceed with reviewing the manuscript even given the publication queue.

You say your review process takes 4 weeks, but I have heard nothing since. Any news?

Brian Martin

## **15 November 1983**

The Editors, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Dear Editors,

On 25 March I sent you an article/review, "The fate of extinction arguments". In reply to your card of 1 April, I sent a note on 12 April saying to proceed with reviewing the manuscript even given the publication queue. I wrote again on 4 July to ask what had happened. I have yet to receive any response concerning the article. You say your review process takes 4 weeks. Has it broken down?

Brian Martin

## Undated [postmarked 22 November 1983]

Dear Professor Martin:

With shaking of heads and much regret, it seems that your manuscript fell between two of our editors. I apologize to you. Indeed our reviewers had advised publication and we were planning to use it in the fall. However, news of the Washington meeting on Atmospheric and Biological Consequences of Nuclear War and the December meeting of the Geophysicists in San Francisco which will consider new studies have caused us to postpone your article.

The Bulletin has commissioned a report on the Washington meeting which I expect to receive in early 1984. My suggestion to you is that we consider your article in light of this report. You may wish instead of commenting on Schell to evaluate the new reports. The scientific papers will be published in *Science* early in 1984.

Sorry for this failure in communication.

Ruth Adams  
Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists



## 5 December 1983

Ruth Adams  
Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Dear Dr Adams,

Thank you for your recent letter about my article 'The fate of extinction arguments'.

I have read reports of the Washington meeting on 'The World After Nuclear War' in *Science* and *New Scientist*, but have not yet read the scientific papers.

Once I have studied the scientific papers, I propose to revise my article as follows. I will go over the history of ideas about nuclear extinction, including Schell's arguments (greatly reduced in length) and the newest ideas, commenting on both the scientific arguments and their limitations. Then I will comment on the political implications of the arguments and on the influence of politics on the development of the scientific arguments themselves.

Let me know if you think it is reasonable to proceed in this way.

Brian Martin

## **27 December 1983**

Dear Mr Martin:

Thank you for your letter of December 5, 1983. Ruth Adams has asked me to ask you to wait until we have the report from the Washington conference meeting.

Joshua Handler  
editorial intern  
Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

## **12 October 1984**

Ruth Adams  
Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

Dear Dr Adams,

On 25 March 1983 I submitted an article, 'The fate of extinction arguments'. In November 1983 you replied saying your reviewers had advised publication but that the Washington meeting on Atmospheric and Biological Consequences of Nuclear War had caused you to postpone the article. You suggested that I might like to evaluate the new reports. On 5 December 1983 I replied, proposing to revise my article along certain lines. On 27 December 1983 Joshua Handler wrote asking me to wait until you had

the report from the Washington conference meeting. I have been waiting ever since, with no word from you. What's the state of play?

Brian Martin

P.S. My book *Uprooting War*, which is just being published in London, deals with some of the political implications of views on nuclear war, as well as many other issues.

## 5 November 1984

Dear Professor Martin:

Until your October 12 letter arrived I unfortunately was not aware that your manuscript was on file at the *Bulletin*. (I became editor of this magazine six weeks ago).

Having now read your piece, I'm afraid that it is dated. The criticisms of Schell's work seem valid, but in the meantime he has published another book and the nuclear winter controversy has begun. However, I very much agree with the thrust of your argument that scientific fact should not be twisted for polemical purposes no matter how important the purposes.

I am sorry that the *Bulletin* let your earlier article slip through the cracks, but would like to invite you to submit either an updated version of the extinction article or something else, perhaps drawn from the work you did on your book *Uprooting War*. Regarding the book, would you please ask your publisher to send the *Bulletin* a review copy?

Again, I'm sorry about the *Bulletin's* lack of communication with you on the previous article and can assure you that such communication failures will not occur here in the future.

Len Ackland  
Editor  
Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

## Postscript by Brian Martin

I decided not to submit an updated version of my article to *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

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Go to

[Brian Martin's publications on nuclear war](#)

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